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ABSTRACT

Exploring the formal and theoretical possibilities available in and through feminist inquiries, this paper investigates the possible impact of feminist theories on three areas of academic writing--the professional, the graduate, and the undergraduate--using a polylogic, polyvocal presentation. The paper explores the theoretical and formal possibilities of feminist approaches to inquiry, with particular attention to sites where feminist influences are absent or distorted in composition studies. The polylogue presented in the paper consists of short spoken pieces which integrate anecdotes, comments and responses, bits of overheard conversation, descriptions, quotations, and interpretations. The paper hopes to create an intertextuality that harkens back to the inter-texture-ality of women's craft: a weaving or quilting that combines, elaborates, and reframes memories, thoughts, and feelings in new patterns. (Contains 34 references.) (RS)

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Forms of (Re)sil(i)ence: Engaging Unsaid Resistances in Disciplinary Discourses

Introduction

MS:

In our presentation, entitled "Forms of (Re)sil(i)ence: Engaging Unsaid Resistances in Disciplinary Discourses," we plan to explore the formal and theoretical possibilities available in and through feminist inquiries.

Recently, feminists have extended cultural critique into academic communities, resisting and challenging institutionalized discourses and practices. Because dominant discourses, by definition, marginalize the voices of "others," many feminists seek to make a place for those others to speak by developing less hierarchical, more connected academic practices and pedagogies (for example, the developmental model proposed by Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, Jill Tarule). Alternative models, for example, question both the agonistic stance of academic argument and the individualistic, proprietary attitudes toward writing and research (as evidenced in the work of Olivia Frey, Robin Lakoff, Linda Brodkey, Jane Tompkins). Instead, these scholars value argument as an exchange of ideas and see writing as a cooperative, negotiated activity (as in the scholarship of Catherine Lamb and Clara Juncker, for example).

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As researchers in rhetoric and composition, we are concerned with whether and how feminist critiques have re-modeled existing practices in our academic community.

These feminist perspectives suggest to us that we offer another alternative argument--one which includes a plurality of voices in interaction. In our polylogic, polyvocal presentation, our panel will touch on three areas of academic writing--the professional, the graduate, and the undergraduate--investigating the possible impact of feminist theories on each form of discourse. We will explore the theoretical and formal possibilities of feminist approaches to inquiry, with particular attention to sites where feminist influences are absent or distorted in composition studies. We believe that our exploration will give voice to the unsaid, generating insights for the continuing efforts to apply feminist theories, research modalities, and pedagogies within our discipline.

By "polylogue," we mean to suggest an interactive enactment of discourse, a formal experiment that will challenge the conventions of "formal academic presentation," with its insistence on hierarchy and ceremony: the speaker's podium, the procession of spoken "products" of research, followed by audience response and recessional. We plan to extend the "process" of research into the situation of the "conference presentation"; we envision a dynamic process of discourse that is framed, but not contained, by our act of drafting portions of the polylogue; we see our performance of an alternative discourse as another way of

making knowledge in and for the discipline of composition studies.

The polylogue will consist of short spoken pieces which integrate anecdotes, comments and responses, bits of overheard conversation, descriptions, quotations, and interpretations; we hope to create, with you, what Diane Freedman has described as an intertextuality that harkens back to the inter-texture-ality of women's craft: a weaving or quilting that combines, elaborates, and reframes memories, thoughts, and feelings in new patterns (41). Our portions of the polylogue reflect our particular concerns, and the strands of our ideas will be interwoven throughout. Since we do not plan to rely primarily on the traditional logical "chains" of claims and evidence that structure much academic argument, we will rely on patterns of thematic associations, language play, and the expressive difference(s) of our individual voices to invite our audience into an alternative discourse, into another way of making knowledge.

JD:

"The (I) in Inquiry:
The Problems of Personal Authority in/for Feminist Research"

At the risk of constructing a metanarrative in which feminists have somehow "moved on" to issues of greater importance, having finished the labors of particular eras, I wish to suggest that feminists have moved from pointing out the

exclusion of women from the traditional "authority" of knowledge "rationally" obtained, to making room for themselves in "masculinist" disciplinary spaces, and to questioning the very notion of "rational inquiry" and the ways language and knowledge are engendered. These projects of social transformation continue at the level of theory and in the practical, daily efforts of working in the academic world, and in them we yet wrestle with the question of authority--to compose different knowledges, to revise the current compositions of knowing, to compose more intricately complex understandings of our work as researchers and teachers with feminist intentions.

KL:

"(Re)garding Feminist Pedagogy:
A Disciplinary Reaction to Feminist Theories of Academic Writing"

One way of examining the impact of feminist theories of composition is to look for a response in a group that is likely to resist those theories--males. Of particular concern is whether theorists are attempting to use or explore implications of feminist understandings in published articles and conference presentations. If they are not modifying their practices, then feminist theories may be effectively silenced in all but feminist classrooms, while resistance to dominant discourses may be silenced/misinterpreted and alternative voices and perspectives lost. My strand of our inquiry will be focused upon recent publications by males that consider feminist alternatives in the

field of composition.

MS:

"Sil ence: Rereading the Silence Space in Student Discourse"

My project is to expand our understanding of silence, to articulate some of the ways in which silence operates within the composition classroom in general and student texts in particular. While silence is a necessary condition for speech, its expression is not limited to that; it possesses a spatial and temporal reality apart from utterance--though not necessarily apart from language. It is at this juncture, the intersection between silence and the attempt to make meaning of student texts, that I wish to concentrate. For as Bernard Dauenhauer points out, silence is more than a negative or derivative quality defined solely by its relation to utterance; it is also as a fluid, positive phenomenon that occurs in conjunction with activities which do not engender sound (e.g., reading, mime, dance) (3).

I wish to examine silence as it occurs alongside/within oral and written discourse. I want to suggest some of the possible readings we attribute to it and to reflect upon the interrelationship (whether real or perceived) of silence and power. By acknowledging how the "unsaid is said," we may recognize the active character of silence and the way that it points us to "center[s] of significance" in student discourses. As teachers of writing, we need to recognize such "centers of significance" not simply as sites of opposition, but as an

articulation which serves as a significant component of the composition classroom.

MS: Dauenhauer explains how the performer of silence is not autonomous; rather, [S]ilence involves a yielding . . . . before some power which is beyond one's control. . . . In performing silence one acknowledges some center of significance of which he[she] is not the source, a center to be wondered at. . . . The very doing of silence is the acknowledgement of the agent's finitude . . . [b]ut correlatively, the agent is aware that the doing of silence opens him[her] to meet that which lies beyond his[her] control. This other reaches the agent only through the agent's yielding. (25)

JD: In her study of a high school in a low-income urban area, Michelle Fine noted that her work as a researcher and the critical/self-reflective discussion of teachers and students at the school were both controlled by tactics of silencing: denials of access, administrative "white noise," various other conversational gambits, and what she calls "not-naming" ensured that certain aspects (and social inequities) of the educational situation remained absent, silent, unexamined (157). In these educational situations, Fine notes, the impulse to silence was nearly always tied to fears of naming: if an "authority" names an aspect of reality, such as sexual promiscuity or racism, this aspect becomes "real"; students will become sexually promiscuous,

those who enforce school policies will become racist (159). Hence, the "not-naming" that the school administrators and teachers practiced--and tried to induce Fine to perpetuate in her research report. In her conclusions, Fine acknowledges that "naming" the absences/silences and inferring their causes might be, and might be taken for, an unsystematic and unsubstantiated critique; however, taking seriously her version of a feminist stance, she writes,

> The researcher's sadistic pleasure of spotting another teacher's collapsed contradictions, aborted analysis, or silencing sentence was moderated only by the ever-present knowledge that similar analytic surgery could easily be performed on my own classes. . . . it is the very "naturalness" of not naming, of shutting down or marginalizing conversations "for the sake of getting on with learning" that demands educators' attention (172).

MS: What Fine calls "white noise" might also be used to describe the "party line liberalism" voiced in some student texts, operating as a kind of "static" which camouflages what the writers really wish to say. In this case, resistance appears in the form of incongruities or discrepancies within a text and may serve as a kind of self-monitoring of potentially disruptive discourse. One student composes a journal response to Judith Fetterley's "Am American Dream: 'Rip Van Winkle'" in which he develops a well-documented support for her position. One voice supports Fetterley's feminist critique:

> Finally, women have begun to find their voice in literature. I am all for it.

Another opens and closes the entry, undercutting Fetterley's efforts:

> I believe she looked too deeply into the text . . . miss[ing] the simple whimsical quality that it seeks to evoke. . . . I think Fetterley comes down too hard on Irving.

KL: For many males, to **adopt** feminism may seem presumptuous. One solution has been instead to **utilize** feminism as one among many theories effective in certain contexts. As Martin Jacobi explains,

> The feminist perspective has identified ways in which collaborative thinking and writing can be used more productively, educationally and professionally. Some of these strategies include sensitivity to others' emotions and non-verbal cues, acknowledgement of previous speakers, and a willingness to include self disclosure (Jacobi 3).

Jacobi also suggests changes in the way language is viewed: rather than expressing reality in more or less "clear" ways, for Jacobi "language use constructs people's versions of reality" (4-5). His class follows Catherine Lamb's ideas about "mediation and negotiation" and emphasizes "collaborative dialectic."

However, in contrast to Lamb's questioning of the agonistic stance, Jacobi calls the collaborative process "cooperative competition" (7). He also refers to "the feminist perspective" as if feminism were a monolithic, univocal movement from which one can derive "strategies"--another agonistic term.

In a larger sense, the strategies reflect a very conventional view of the role of women. The passive values he lists--sensitivity to others, and willingness to self disclosure--are the very "June Cleaver" values that some feminists, such as Helene Cixous and others, reject. Jacobi "legitimizes" and to

some sense "de-genders" these ways of relating by offering them as ways for both men and women to interact, but his assumption that these characteristics can become "strategies" leaves these alternative ways of thinking engulfed within the present metaphors of knowledge.

JD: Susan Jarratt discusses how "nurturing" feminist pedagogical practices, applied uncritically in the composition classroom, can put students at risk; shall the feminist teacher, for example, respond with unconditional acceptance when a student writes of personal experiences and valorizes racist or sexist attitudes or behaviors? Jarratt argues that the expressivist focus on valuing student experiences

> is an important starting point for feminist pedagogy. But my double concern about those feminist compositionists who advocate such pedagogies is not only that they are positioned unequally in the expressivist discourse but also that they spend too little time helping their students learn how to argue about public issues--making the turn from the personal back out into the public. . . . I envision a composition course in which students argue about the ethical implications of discourse on a wide range of subjects and, in so doing, come to identify their personal interest with others, understand those interests as implicated in a larger communal setting, and advance them in a public voice (121).

This means, of course, that the feminist teacher must acknowledge her or his authority for the common good of students; the public discussion must have a moderator who takes a stance of power openly and in full awareness of the obligation to protect the silence and privacy of some students, and to chance silencing others who might express unwelcome (and, after all, unsupported)

points of view. How might this be a paternalistic gesture?

MS: During a class discussion of an assigned essay, one student's hostile remarks about interracial dating effectively silenced not only the student who had raised the issue but the rest of the audience as well. The after-silence which followed did more than simply suspend discussion; it brought it to a full stop. After some time, class discussion turned stiffly to other aspects of the essay, but the fissure created was never mended. What Dauenhauer, calls the "bounds of propriety" that exist in "interlocutor-centered discourse" had been transgressed so that the primary responsibility each speaker has to consider the other's needs is denied. Recording in her journal, my silenced student, put it more simply:

> As far as today's discussion, this only goes to show you that people really can't talk about what they feel.

MS: As Dauenhauer notes, [S]ilence cannot be a radically autonomous act. . . . performed in radical independence. Someone must indeed act for there to be silence. But he[she] must act in concert with someone or something which is fundamentally distinct from him[her] (24-25).

JD: Nadya Aisenberg and Mona Harrington have written of the difficulties some women academics experience as they work toward a different discourse, a different expression of authority:

> It is difficult, they write, to find a language in which to express divergent perspectives. . . . What one

> frequently hears, therefore, in feminist exchanges. . .is a good deal of hesitant, fragmented, even agitated speech. Unfinished sentences, a succession of words tried and discarded, fast speech, raised voices, pauses, shifts in direction, emotive hand gestures--the opposite of the clear, fluent, assured articulation of thought by the great professors who are the models for the public presentation of ideas (82).

KL: Any glance into the CDROM at the local library will illustrate that feminist thinking is still mostly a "female" endeavor. Enter the descriptor "feminist" with just about any other descriptor and the list will be a vast majority women. Perhaps this is rightfully so; male feminist in some ways may be a contradiction in terms. But then, the concept of contradiction is rooted and given authority in Aristotelian logic, a mode of thinking brought into question by the "both/and" thinking espoused by Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Nancy Vogel, and other feminists who wish to question traditional ideas about logic and either/or thinking. Perhaps what is needed are ways to be male and feminist, ways that do not threaten to negate the concerns of real women living the real world--ways that will keep men from authorizing and taking over feminist agendas.

The exclusion of men from feminism is then both of some necessity and of some danger, since men still hold a majority of the positions of privilege in our society, since "women's studies" programs are often marginalized, and since patriarchal values--the single objective author, the emphasis on text, and the belief in authorial possession--still dominate composition practices (Haefner 7). If change is to be made in what passes as

"normal discourse," men will have to be a part of that change.

JD: As Sandra Harding has suggested, feminist epistemologies have begun to benefit from grounding knowledge claims in social standpoints. That is, they have begun to consider the perspectives possible from a particular, situated knowing of events by a person whose experience might cross multiple [even conflicting] dimensions of social construction. While standpoint theory, had moved us beyond essentialist-experiential notions of what a universally-conceived "woman" can possibly know, there remains a hesitance to admit that men can have feminist insights. "It is important to keep in mind," Harding says, "that feminists are made, not born. Biology is not enough to make...Margaret Thatcher [a] feminist[]" (279).

KL: Don Kraemer says, paraphrasing David Bleich, "the rules of the academic-discourse language game, by favoring the dominant class, extend the traditional sex/gender system" (305). He goes on to suggest differences between "synecdochic activity"--a "process of attachment," where "we identify with what is said"--from "symbolic--"a process of separation that transcends immediate social contexts and normal ways of being in the world," where we reflect on what is said, interpreting the worlds that words evoke" (309). He finds that while the academy favors the symbolic, he believes that writers such as Carol Gilligan have described "attachment" as the "foundation of female self-

definition" (310). But his solution is not in "replacing symbolic activity with synecdochic" because such a way of thinking assumes "polarities" which posit language as "seamless cloth--global systems kept pure by their internal logic, not local strategies that themselves are constituted by competing and contradictory moments" (313). The activities are not discreet, and not gender specific. Instead of replacing patriarchal systems outright, we ought then to focus instead on what usually gets ignored, the resistances to the games, and to redefine the academic game in terms of "self activity for others" rather than competition with others.

Feminism here touches the edges of epistemology. Not a theory to be manipulated, but ways of seeing that have implications. As Kraemer states, "Our classrooms are not havens in a heartless world but moments, glimpses, of different possibilities" (317).

JD: Of the problem confronting the scholar or researcher with feminist concerns, Michele Le Doeuff has noted that various discourses on epistemology and method have reached an impasse of sorts (7). Some feminists reject the western tradition of rational inquiry because it rests on tacit assumptions that personify knowledge in ways that exclude women as knowers; yet, in their rejection, these theorists posit an oppositional "rationality" that entails a (feminine) personification of knowledge which does not partake of traditional (masculinist)

assumptions. The circularity of such arguments leads Le Doeuff to ask questions about the possibility--and preferability--of deriving authority and validation from gendered conceptions of knowledge and rationality. She writes,

> To what extent is knowledge personalized--that is, bears the marks of the person--and to what extent is it not? Or, which stages of an inquiry are influenced by the person, and which are not? These are questions difficult to answer, and perhaps this very difficulty is what makes the gendered conception of knowledge, as a self-evident course, so popular: it spares one the trouble of pursuing intricate questions just by providing a monolithic answer, though a strangely inconsistent one: men are the only persons able to do impersonal and depersonalized work! (2).

JD: Noting the close connections between knowledge, expertise, and authority, Lorraine Code argues that the epistemic authority of expertise derives from relationships of trust which can, of course, be misplaced (181). In order to place and earn trust in situations of unequal power, she suggests, we must learn to distinguish "<u>authoritative</u> manifestations of epistemic authority from merely <u>authoritarian</u> ones" (185). The distinction, she notes,

> turns upon the competence, the informed and hence justified position of an authoritative expert, contrasted with the <u>power</u> of an authoritarian knower to claim credibility on the basis of privilege alone or of ideological orthodoxy, rather than on the basis of responsible epistemic practice. Power may also be a product of authoritative knowing, but it is more likely to be earned than arbitrarily claimed. An authoritative knower is often diffident about his or her degree of expertise, fallibilist, and prepared to reconsider or even to reserve judgement. Authoritarian knowers, who have more reason to be diffident, often are less so (185).

MS: As a graduate student, she was told that she had a better chance of making her case more solid (shall we substitute "less disruptive"?) within the academic community if she chose to ally herself with the claims and arguments already made by accomplished authors than if she proposed an untried methodology.

MS: Michel Foucault offers another way of explaining the operations of power. While he does not sees it as democratically distributed (99), he nevertheless describes it as a fluid and non-hierarchical phenomenon:

> [P]ower is not to be taken as a phenomenon of one individual's consolidated and homogenous domination over others, or that of one group or class over others. . . . Power must be [by: sic] analyzed as something which circulates . . . It is never localized. . . never in anybody's hands . . . . And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. ("Two Lectures" 98)

KL: Feminism cannot be just discussed. It should be about **how** we discuss, **who gets** discussed, **who controls** what is discussed. Mike Hood, proposing a model of an "idea-centered" composition program says,

> The program has three interrelated goals: (1) to engage freshman writers in "college thinking"; (2) to teach students the conventions of academic discourse; and (3) to help all students achieve a minimal level of competence in doing college writing. Classroom discussion, which is the core of the program, can be characterized as idea-centered because it focuses on reading, talking, and writing about serious ideas such as feminism, civil disobedience, and poverty (Hood 1).

The wording of this passage could probably easily match the guidelines of many universities. The writing teacher's job is to

reproduce in the students the language and ways of seeing common to the elite, those who have learned the various weavings and turnings of university discourse. Moreover, the notion that many feminists challenge the very notions of "academic discourse" "college thinking," and "competence" seems to have no effect. Feminism, in this construct, is a "serious idea," an abstraction that can be "discussed" like a social problem. Feminism here is to be put on display, dissected, categorized, thesis-ized as one, take it or leave it, perspective among others. It is a woman invited to a male discussion to represent "female concerns."

KL: David Bleich provides another view: "As a political movement it [feminism] is unlike most others we have known in that it aims to share and diffuse political power rather than to gain and hold it for itself. Toward these ends, accordingly, there is no sign that war will be one of its strategies" (The Double Perspective 27).

Here feminism is an "it" that uses non-violent "strategies." Feminism might not be this monolithic, but the confusion of the war and strategy metaphors may signal the demise of the agonistic metaphor by redefinition (Adrienne Rich's "re-vision"). Bleich goes on, "the feminist movement is trying to enact what men have said they wished to enact but have never really succeeded in doing: transforming fights and wars and 'militant' action into purely social and verbal forms of conflict resolution" (27).

JD: Sally Miller Gearheart argues (and I use this term intentionally) that the intention to change another person's beliefs or actions--"the conversion model" that is the basis of rhetorical/educational practice--is violent, and is different from the "conquest model" as rape is different from outright war (196). She conceives of an alternative learning environment, where teacher and students can change themselves in communication with one another; the goal of this communication is to preserve the differences between people, and the equality of power among participants. In order to achieve this communication, Gearheart envisions (certainly the ideal situation) an absence of intention to persuade, a tolerance of difference, a felt power equity, an acknowledgement that communication is indeed difficult, and "each participant['s] willing[ness] on the deepest level to yield her/his position entirely to the other(s)" (Emphasis added 199).

MS: As Susan Jarratt points out, if we can grant "some scope for change through human agency" (108), Gearheart's model does not account for differences between groups such as competing cultural or institutional discourses. Rather, her model is grounded on the premise of one individual speaking to another. The issue of agency raises new kinds of issues. For example, there is the question of how one should answer a student whose assimilation of "proper" institutional discourse is so vested that despite efforts to encourage alternative approaches to a writing paper, he defers to the power of the academy. He admits:

> As I began to re-write my essay and put more of my views into it, I ran into a wall. . . . I adapted as much as I really could, . . . [but] it is still in the back of my mind that by including what I have it has lowered the tone and quality of my paper.

What is operating here is not simply a one-on-one conversation about the equity of various revision options. Rather we witness the overwhelming influence wielded by a more "authorized" discourse community: the university.

MS: In his explanation of the pervasiveness of power, Foucault speaks of how the individual becomes the vehicle of power's articulation, assuming a kind of self-regulatory position with regard to his/her behavior. He writes,

> this new mechanism is more dependent upon bodies and what they do [or what they do not do perhaps?]. . . It is a type of power which is constantly exercised by means of surveillance[,] . . . presuppos[ing] a tightly knit grid of material coercions. . . (105).

MS: Students also exhibit instances of self-regulatory or self-silencing practices within their texts and, in so doing, mask the full impact of what they might say. For example, a black female student writes,

> ([M]y former, white, history professor, ... insists that blacks came over almost totally as indentured servants. Although I want to believe the indentured servant version of the story, the slavery story seems more credible.")

KL: After reading Rachel Blau DuPlessis's "For the Etruscans," one female student opted to write in a similar, non-linear, non-logical style. The result was beautiful--interrelational,

personal, an interweaving scholarship and experience. I told her that although the writing would not "fly" in other classes, I would try to interpret it on its own terms. She revised it totally--neat thesis, three main points, an academic "A."

MS: Here the students clearly question the power of the university, yet are careful to "temper" (I use this word purposely) their writings by either recording them parenthetically or changing them altogether. Here again, the desire to create a unified discourse replaces/silences their desire to challenge what they perceive to be a more "sanctioned" version of written texts.

JD: In "Not One of the Guys: The Female Researcher in a Male-Dominated Setting," Joan Neff Gurney describes the following complications that can confront a woman who wishes to study social settings where women have largely been excluded: There is no literature that discusses how a researcher's status characteristics can affect the development and maintenance of rapport; no professional discussion of how a women might create a researcher presence that is non-threatening and credibly professional when rapport might be misconstrued by participants in the study (leading, for example, to sexual advances); no attention to how reciprocity of research relationships might differ for men and women; and many other underexplored problems (43-44). Even the work of other women in one's discipline is

often less than helpful, since gender-related problems may have been minimal, or because the researcher may deny difficulties that she thinks make her work appear unsound (44).

JD: In a chapter entitled "Gender in Composition Research: A Strange Silence," Nancy Mellin McCracken, Lois Green, and Claudia Greenwood discuss the "troubling omissions" in their separately published studies. A number of cross-disciplinary studies suggest, these researchers note, that gender is a powerful, pervasive influence in classroom situations; however, few composition researchers--and here the writers include their own initial reports--address gender in depth as a force operating within social contexts for the teaching of writing. McCracken, Green, and Greenwood write:

> We do not know why our colleagues studying teachers' responses to students' writing have failed to discuss the gender issue they initially raised in their reports or why research on the teaching of composition has generally been silent on the gender of teachers. We do know about our own practice as researchers, however. Each of us conducted independent research into teachers' interactions with composition students. Each of our studies included both men and women instructors. Each of us observed the men and women instructors behaving in gender-typical ways. And yet each of us, in our initial research reports, remained silent about gender as a factor in teachers' interactions with their composition students (354).

JD: "There is also," Gurney suggests, "the added embarrassment of acknowledging that one's status as a female overshadowed one's identity as a researcher" (44).

JD: Something a woman researcher has never said to me: "You think everything is attributable to gender. Why don't you ever consider that it could be simple personality conflict?"

JD: Something else a woman researcher has never said to me: "You can't ever know for sure that this is gender-related."

JD: Kathleen B. Jones discusses how poststructuralist trends have complicated feminist inquiry, she notes that some feminists have problematized <u>all</u> authority and exercise of authority in their recent self-reflexive critiques (121). She asks whether it is productive to forswear ever taking stances of authority, to systematically avoid constructing systems, to defer making meanings because language endlessly defers stable meanings, to assert irreducible and, ultimately, insurmountable "difference" that forecloses the possibility of common knowledge and communal action for transformation. Jones suggests that establishing authority can mean

> searching for the basis to refound our social relationships. Gender, race, class, and sexuality do not dissolve into endlessly mobile, hence non-existent, chimeras. Instead, we give those concepts flesh while maintaining analytic distance between them, as heuristic devices, and the lived, material reality in and through which they echo and are refracted. If we remain aware of the existential difference, often rhetorically transgressed, between the <u>analytic utility</u> of a concept and the <u>material reality</u> which it seeks to express, we can avoid the essentialism that haunts much of the discussion of "differences" (123).

MS: Some teachers, in their efforts to implement alternative pedagogies have met with resistance from their students. One student observes:

> I feel this course was dominated and overpowered by feminist doctrines and ideals" (Bauer, "The Other 'F' Word" 385).

Another comments:

> Feminism is an important issue in society--but . . . [i]t needs to be confronted on a personal basis, not in the classroom (385).

A teacher responds,

> [M]y feminist pedagogy serves to break down their [the students'] will to believe in pedagogy's neutral agenda. . . . What is needed now . . . is an even stronger advocacy of feminism as an <u>authorizing</u>, even egalitarian voice (Bauer, "Comment and Response" 103-04) [emphasis added].

Another talks about resistance in her students' writing:

> Impassioned writing, and its attending resistance, is the site for a strong voice. . . The strong voice, however, needs an answer, needs <u>tempering</u> (Woolf 491) [emphasis added].

MS: Question: Do these efforts to "temper" students voices and "authorize" a particular pedagogical frame sanction/silence a particular kind of speaking and a particular kind of speaker, simply exchanging one value system for another?

MS: Last spring, my English 102 curriculum focused on issues of race, gender, and class. I relied on a multicultural approach using class readings of nontraditional written and visual texts, one of which was Spike Lee's <u>Do the Right Thing</u>. A student walked out after watching the film for only twenty minutes, and

his journal response explained why:

> The in-groups were black youths who ran around the streets. The out-groups were the whites. . . . I didn't watch this film because of the reverse racism portrayed by Spike Lee.

Question: Is the student who walks out or the writer whose voice the teacher wishes to "temper" resisting then as an exercise of his/her power?

JD: Aisenberg and Harrington write:

> Women, speaking from different perspectives, trying to convey different premises, different conclusions from those prevailing in their fields, face a double barrier: the old norms counseling silence, and a chilling expectation of misunderstanding, of disparagement of efforts to alter the discourse. The result, for many (although by no means for all) is a muted public voice, speech tempered by indecision about how best to confront incomprehension or resistance, words left unsaid, authority unclaimed (83).

MS: The work of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule also examines the notion of silence. For these researchers, a woman's development of a personal voice becomes a metaphor for her intellectual and ethical growth (18), and is intimately linked with the individual's sense of mind and self. As they define it, silence functions both as a lack of a public voice in dialogue with other speakers and as an absence of a private voice devoted to introspection. Silence, in this instance, is a measure of disconnection--from others and from the self.

MS: Michelle Fine writes, "To question from above holds intellectual promise; to question from below forebodes danger" (158).

JD: A note from my reading journal:

> The feeling that one's authority derives from a closeness to a particular experience has lead to a rhetoric of location: a naming of oneself along multiple social dimensions: often, arguments (or discussions, or exchanges of ideas) begin with precise lists of the author's locations amidst the constructions of this society, such as age, race, gender, sexual identity, social class, level of education, religion, and so on. What worries me is the way that this attempt to very carefully ground and delimit one's claims can lead to an infinite regress of self-labeling, and can imply that one cannot know or speak authoritatively except as touches on the particulars of one's own experience.
>
> On the other hand, I am persuaded that those who have been excluded from, who stand in some ways "outside" the traditional western ways of knowing are able to offer much-needed critiques and complements. I want to see these standpoints, these self-locations not as statements that somehow contain what a particular woman can know, but rather as places where questions can begin; there is, as Adrienne Rich says, an "absolute necessity to raise these questions in the world: where, when, and under what conditions have women acted and been acted upon?" (Blood 214).

JD: Maria C. Lugones explains:

> One does not just go around alone [lonely maybe]...not individual-style alone making or remaking anything, ignoring the relations one has, the ones one does not have, the good about the good ones, the bad about the bad ones and the good ones. To know oneself and one's situation is to know one's company or lack thereof, is to know oneself with or against others (35-6).

Lugones goes on to describe the missing "interactive step" in much feminist theorizing that would allow the (more often than

not: white, middle-class, female) feminist theorist to identify with the self that is mirrored in an "outsider's" view of her (43): "When I do not see plurality in the very structure of [your] theory, I see the woman of color that I am speaking precisely and seriously in calm anger as if trying to shatter thick layers of deafness accompanied by a clean sense of my own absurdity. Don't you?" (43).

JD: "The work I've been doing recently," Jane Tompkins writes, "has circled around the subject of violence. . . . Can thoughts be violent? And, if so, do they have the same moral weight as violent acts?" (585). Tompkins speaks of the moment when, with a feeling of inevitability and scholarly self-righteousness, I draw and fire in the high noon of argument, when I fuel a critique by carving out some turn of phrase in the adversary's text, and I commit the bloodless violence of thinking I can win, I have won, the battle of wits.

KL: David Bleich writes,

> the feminist argument is this: because the ideology of male control of and violence toward females is already active and enacted in almost all social institutions--the process of knowing and institutions of learning also reflect this ideology. . . . What appears to be an epistemological approach--objectivity--is historically and culturally related to masculine domination of and violence toward women (234).

A questioning of epistemology. The academy as a place of violence toward women. Yet, his critique originates from "the" feminist argument. Is there domination and control at work even

here? Probably, but he knows that epistemology is the place to begin, whether to replace the old or to add the alternatives. The problem, as he sees it, is "sexism," and the composition classroom should be one place where teachers are "forcefully and self consciously teaching the political character of language and writing" (245). Yet, he still has to sell his position to males: "From a feminist perspective, the teaching of language and literacy is always the teaching of language to the disenfranchised. The privileged are themselves disenfranchised insofar as they can only speak to themselves and understand few others...." (246). We are all oppressed by the system, all "implicated" within it, all responsible for questioning it. At the same time Bleich assumes a certain homogeneity in his readers (i.e., abhorrence of violence, desire to rid the world of sexism. But if competition, authority, and violence rule in the academy, what makes us think these assumptions will "win"?

MS: As Rich reminds us, "Lying is done with words and also with silence" (Lies 186).

KL: A professor told me that he did not teach any feminist ideas in his classes because he had no "expertise" in the field. He could not presume to teach what he did not master. I wondered what his classes were like. I think I already knew.

JD: A woman colleague comments that she never fel[illegible] silenced

until she started her academic work--that her parents had taught her that she had, in fact, a responsibility to speak her mind.

JD: A comment, written on a draft of a seminar paper in which I had attempted a formal experiment (I posited no thesis; I suggested rather than argued; I wandered, drafting, and exploring): "I understand what you're trying to do here . . . but if you want to publish this, you'll need to have a thesis."

JD: "The profession by and large values conventions of . . . discourse," Olivia Frey asserts, "that may not fit the values, the perceptual frameworks, and the ways of writing of many women in English Departments across the country. These women are me and you" (507-8).

JD: I noted that this professor had often praised a particular feminist's experimental prose. "She's published, and you're not," was the reply.

KL: As DuPlessis says, "For women, then, existing in the dominant system of meanings and values that structure culture and society may be a painful, amusing, double dance, clicking in, clicking out--the divided consciousness" (285).

MS: I asked a colleague about the reasons for silence in a classroom. He replied, "The classroom creates a culture of its

own. Whether power is either definitely there or it is perceived to be there, silence is always implicated in power.

MS: Sisella Bok writes:

> The ability to maintain control over secrecy and openness has often been discussed in the context of silence: The virtue that Plutarch called "profound and awesome," and that many classical thinkers believed indispensable to practical wisdom. Only those capable of silence exhibited self-control making them worthy of trust . . . the garrulous betrayed their unreliability at every turn (42).

That students respond to a classroom's "open" forum as an occasion to validate views which tend to close discussion calls the term "open" into question. Here openness signals vulnerability, not a willing disposition to alternatives. Choosing "not to speak," then, may be seen as a positive force, an act of practical wisdom to preserve one's selfhood and integrity.

KL: A student of mine writes,

> Thinking. I am thinking right now and I am thinking about thinking, and what is more annoying is that while I am thinking about thinking, I am writing, and while I am writing about thinking, I start thinking about writing. This is what your class has done to me. I have learned to take a step back and look more clearly at the way I perceived things and words. I have gained a better understanding of the writing process.

The class had read articles about how culture, gender, race, ethnicity, and education effect writing practices. This student puts in simple language the insight that writing is epistemology:

The ways we write, what we write about, and who we write for are all implicated in ever-increasing circles of relationships. These relationships become a part of our self-awareness as we bring them into consciousness, articulate them from their silences, and incorporate them into our conversation.

MS: Question: Aren't we then, as researchers, students, and teachers asking for the ethical use of silence and speech as we explore their complexities? What would an ethical use entail? At the very least, perhaps it means being self-reflective about and articulating to those around us the importance of treating our readership, our subject matter, and our fellow writers (at all levels) with integrity and respect.

JD: There are times when the phrase turns just so, and there is the pleasure that keeps me at this work of writing, the knowing that some reader will trace that turn appraisingly with her finger, as if on the smooth-stitched pane of a quilt, and she will, perhaps, nod. There is that pleasure, and there is the harrying thought of the many women who cannot, or do not have the money and the time, to read the ruminations of some woman who has the privilege and the luxury of time to "just think," and who often does not think to eat when she is writing.

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